



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0473SC-1 for Laurens 55

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium describes an innovative approach to building and using a personalized learning system, by building on interests and strength of both teachers and students.</p> <p>Along with state initiatives, the consortium is building, implementing and using a set of tools that not only track student achievement but also track interventions and their effectiveness.</p> <p>The four core areas are covered by appropriate strategies.</p> <p>The vision provides an achievable and targeted method of improving the educational system by engaging middle school students in a personalized learning setting. Tools will be developed along with data to focus the project and make improvements of engaging the students by using personal interests.</p> <p>By focusing on middle school students, the proposal is clear, credible and achievable.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A process to select schools was described. The rationale to target middle schools was appropriate and based on research. A description of the consortium plan for middle schools was descriptive and detailed. Charts were used to help provide an overview of the project.</p> <p>The list of schools, students and teachers involved in the program was described. Student groups including low income, and special needs students was listed.</p> <p>There is extensive evidence to support the consortium, LEA-level and school-level implementation. Justification is provide to target middle school students. It was clear that conversations between the districts helped to focus the grant and build an implementation plan that will phase in subject areas.</p> <p>A detailed implementation plan was provided along with research to support the plan. Transitions to the middle school and from the middle school along with a personalized learning system was noted.</p> <p>Supporting research material was provided. The individual districts have also been part of a larger consortium since 1997.</p> <p>All school data was provided including all the required elements and meeting the requirements. The implementation plans were detailed, appropriate and comprehensive in nature.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium presents a plan that covers all aspects of the assurance areas. Specific timelines and responsible individuals were not shown but goals, performance measures were in evidence.</p> <p>Middle school staff members have taken ownership of the project as a result of focus groups and stakeholder communication.</p> <p>It is noted that the Personalized Learning Plans will become part of the culture of the district. The culture aspect of the implentation is one of the most important components for a strong, supported project.</p>		

As a result of the design of the grant, the later phases can grow either toward elementary levels or toward high school levels. The idea of focusing the grant at the middle school level provides many options based on the data gathered during early phases.

The goals are clearly defined and focused on acceration of academic performance. All of these point to a strong school reform and change platform.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The design of the grant allows for realistic gap closing goals over five years. Consideration was demonstrated for gaps that were unrealistic to totally close over the grant period.

The concept of increasing high school credit for middle school students is strong evidence to improve the graduation rate. Students who enter high school with credits already under their belt have a better chance of graduating on time.

The concept of measuring student growth was described in terms of how the state of South Carolina is working on the issue.

The data shows that there are large gaps especially with students with disabilities. It is feasible that the personal learning system proposed by this grant and the realistic goals established could narrow these gaps. Because of the design of the project and the ability to correlate interventions with student achievement, there is a discussion of a state poverty teacher certification. Rationale and an implantation plan for gap closure was detailed.

The plan for increasing the graduation rate includes areas such as credits earned as an 8th grader, defining what career readiness means and then coming up with appropriate metrics, subject area assessments, vertical alignment of curriculum, safety-net programs, transition programs, specific interventions and other wrap around services. The plan is very detailed.

Goals for college enrollment will be set and tracked using college literacy programs, campus visits, FAFSA forms, and professional development for Career Development Facilitators.

The consortium did not address postsecondary degree attainment based on the focus on middle school students but there is thought on implementing the College Board's Springboard program.

The goals are describe in detail and written to provide a roadmap over the term of the grant. Based on the target population, goals, strategies, infrastructure in place, ability to track variables and the details of implementation, the project is feasible. Information gained because of the tracking system can be used to clearly identify variables that provide best evidence of success.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

There was evidence that supported the fact that the district has been successful over the past four years in closing gaps in the middle schools. Data supplied also showed that most schools improved their academic performance in Language Arts and Math. Awards were presented to three of the middle schools for their performance. Commendations from external evaluators were also used to demonstrate the commitment to improvement.

None of the consortium middle schools were targeted as lowest achieving. Two elementary schools were targeted as focus schools. They are newly identified.

Although overall graduation rates were not presented in the part of the grant, data was supplied to show how one high school works with subgroups to improve the graduation rate. The program is adaptable and changes based on data gathered by the district.

Student performance data is available to parents via an online system and mobile apps. This same system provides a tools for teachers.

College enrollment rates were not presented in this section of the grant.

Examples of success, partnerships, transition programs, closing schools, changing the principal, implementing school reform

models, targeted school-wide improvement efforts and school awards were presented to support this area.

Except for college enrollment rates, the consortium covered the area in great detail. Many tools are in place for teachers, administrators and parents to help monitor and build successes for students.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

5

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium presented sample information from web pages that describes the requirements of this section. Information was available for personnel salaries at the school level.

There is evidence that instructional and support staff salaries are available to the public via the web. Additional data was provided in the appendix.

School level non-personnel expenditures is available to the public via school web sites.

Additionally credit card statements for the districts must be available per South Carolina law. Detailed examples were presented in the appendix.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

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8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative described the conditions for autonomy and flexibility that exist for schools in South Carolina. It was clear that the consortium was thoughtful about how the personalized learning system would fit under the current laws, testing windows and similar programs already in place. Because the project centers on the middle school the constraints of Carnegie units would not be a barrier.

Flexibility was promoted by the State Superintendent, but specific issues such as seat time waivers or teachers of record areas were not addressed.

The districts have virtual online courses. Two project-based learning programs have been submitted to the state as "innovative course." Approval of these courses was not yet evident.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

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8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Detailed evidence was presented covering all aspects of this area of the grant. Specific meetings were held involving all stakeholders. Meeting dates were listed for all the schools.

Over thirty letters of support from a variety of sources were provided in the appendix. It was clear that much work went into gathering information, planning, writing and garnishing support for this grant. Some of the stakeholders are willing to partner should the grant be awarded.

Even though collective bargaining is not part of structure in the consortium, there were letters of support from the teacher's association. All schools had over a 70% approval rate from the building level teachers. The combined approval rating is almost 84%.

There was a huge amount data collection done to prepare for this grant.

Although letters of support were documented by mayors, there was not specific evidence to show that they had ten days to comment on the grant.

The state did comment on the grant and the consortium had time to build responses.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The gap analysis is described in detail. It covers areas such as wealth of data available in different software systems to the impact of school culture on successful implementation of the project. Bits and pieces of the components are in place but the

narrative shows the need for one portal to access the data. involvement of staff is a component of the plan. There is evidence of teacher involvement in the development of the plan.

The gaps are well defined and described in detail showing the amount of thought and planning that went on in developing this project.

The comment related to the achievement gap with IEP students (that they have a personalized plan yet achievement is "disturbing", is an argument for trying the interest-based personalized learning program as a way to engage students.

Based on the detail in the section, the gaps and needs were documented and explained.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Student learning is a clear focus of this narrative. Using what the state has in place in regards to common core and career ready, the plan targets middle school students initially in Reading and Language Arts.</p> <p>The described use of a Personalized Learning System, along with direct instruction and teacher/student joint development of targets and goals provides a variety of tools that addresses student achievement.</p> <p>The goal of providing at least one high school credit to middle school students provides a dual purpose of accelerating learning and accelerating accumulation of credits toward graduation.</p> <p>Because the target is middle school, data can be gathered, schedules can be altered and improvements can be made without worry of interfering with Carnegie Credit requirements. Once the program is refined additional phases can contend with schedule, seat time and teacher of credit issues.</p> <p>Throughout the section there is an emphasis on matching student interests with teachers who have skill sets in that area all to create a better, efficient learning system. This engagement approach is a sound way to deepen learning experiences. It is also a great way to motivate students.</p> <p>The data systems that will be in place provide a good way to analyze the personal learning program by tracking the interventions and outcomes. This tool and the feedback will be vital to improving the learning system. The plan also calls for teacher evaluations and professional development to be tied to this which will produce even more data. Overall this is a very interesting component of the plan and it will provide data to determine the success of the program.</p> <p>There was minimal evidence to support exposure to diverse cultures. Participation with the Confucius Institute was mentioned but not how it could become part of this proposal.</p> <p>The narrative described all areas in this section and targeted the requirements of creating a personalized learning system using a variety of tools.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan builds on the premise that students who are interested in a particular topic will become more engaged if that topic is used to help teach the subject material. This is the argument used as a basis for building this program. In order for this to be successful the consortium will involve staff in the development, implementation and improvement of the system. The teacher development of Mastery Guides is an important part of the program. This process is described.</p> <p>There was evidence that professional learning communities will be a vital part of the program. Summer workshops and professional development are included in the narrative. The consortium will study best practices and also report on what they have learned in the personalized learning environment. These indicate that the consortium values the importance of teachers and how to replicate the lessons learned.</p> <p>Current tools that are in place (MAP and state testing) along with the new learning system will be used to help monitor student progress. A unique part of the proposal is links professional development used to student achievement. Quarterly professional</p>		

learning community meetings will be used to study achievement data. These parts of the plan demonstrates the mission to build a better learning environment based on data.

The section on educator effectiveness covered areas such as value added and EVAAS. It was unclear how those measures are used to evaluate teachers. Other tools are listed but the "hope" is that the SMARTER Balanced assessments will provide student growth information. This is an indication that the teacher evaluation system does yet have a good student growth measure.

The section on hard-to-staff was minimally covered. There was no indication that this is or is not a problem for the consortium.

Overall this section described a climate where teachers can have an impact on the design, development and implementation of the personal learning system. Their conversations and study in a professional learning community environment can lead to improved academic performance. The weak area is in the teacher evaluation program and the methods by which value added or educator effectiveness is calculated. The narrative clearly describe this and the consortium does have ways to manage this issue.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Since this is a consortium of individual school districts, the narrative discusses how the organization will be organized. This is more complex than a single district because of the schools and service center that is involved. The plan including MOU's, staffing and resumes are described and appropriate for the consortium.</p> <p>The school leadership team section concentrates on the principal as the building and instructional leader. There is no mention of teachers serving on a school leadership team. Flexibility is listed as an important component of a successful implementation.</p> <p>Credit based on mastery is evident based on a number of examples in the narrative. There is a process to gain Carnegie credit called proficiency-based credit. Districts are currently investigating the expansion of this program. This is a feasible way to grant credit under the new personalized learning system.</p> <p>The changes proposed will require that the school culture be addressed. This is recognized.</p> <p>The consortium addresses the need to have special needs students as part of this system and recognizes the need to experience learning outcomes in a personalized environment.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The ability for parents to access data and the PLE are considered. The narrative provides feasible solutions to this problem through access at public places and the development of mobile apps. Training parents on the data system, when they are already at school, was another reasonable solution to providing access and training.</p> <p>Staffing, online support and support groups are described to offer ongoing technical support.</p> <p>The consortium understands the importance of exportable data and has made it a requirement for the personalized learning system.</p> <p>The school infrastructure and proposed components to support personalized learning are described. The activities are reasonable in scope and can be supported by the consortium.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative describes a number of continuous improvement methodologies that are evident throughout the consortium. A governance structure is in place and staff will be hired to be responsible for various aspects of the grant. Rubrics and student assessment data will be used to monitor and inform the improvement process. This is a reasonable approach to continuous improvement.</p> <p>The publicly sharing of information is described and covers all the traditional ways that districts communicate to the public. School Board reports, web updates, press releases and special events are all part of the ongoing communication and engagement section.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative describes a number of strategies that the consortium will use to accomplish ongoing communication and engagement. These are all reasonable expectations and appropriate for this type of project.</p> <p>A clear organizational chart will be used to support communication.</p> <p>Electronic methods such as the web, emails and announcements via portals will be used.</p> <p>An external evaluation will produce a report that will be disseminated via email to stakeholders.</p> <p>Annual meetings, conferences student trainings and online comment forms round out the proposal.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium proposes thirteen performance measures and describes rationale, the feedback provided and how the measure will be reviewed and improved. Each performance measure is tied back to the grant goals.</p> <p>The consortium is aware that the measurement for effective principals and teachers will change over the course of the grant. This weakness has been noted previously. A state-level defined, one year student growth model is not yet available.</p> <p>There was no evidence of a measure for physical well-being and motor development, or social-emotional development at any grade level. School climate surveys were noted as performance measures.</p> <p>Since the target of this grant is the middle school, many of the "required" performance measures are not listed. A high school academic indicator, number and percentage of participating students who complete FAFSA forms are not documented. As the grant moves to different phases--including the high school and elementary school, new performance measures that include the required ones should be added. This was not specified.</p> <p>This section was detailed and appropriate for the focus of the initial grant. The required measures that were missing lowered the score to a medium area.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium is being very purposeful in the design and evaluation of the grant. An external evaluator will be used to gather information. The unique perspective is the program identifier and effectiveness rating system that will tie many variables back to student achievement. This data can be used as a basis to implement the best practices in other schools. It will clearly document cause and effect on student achievement.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The grant budget is written in great detail and describes ongoing expenses and one-time costs. Thought was provided for sustainability after the grant period ends. This includes redirecting funds and looking for license-free items.</p> <p>Funds from other sources are described as state, local and federal. No other detail was provided.</p> <p>An interesting conversation between the state department and the consortium on sustainability was located in the appendix. The concerns are reasonable in light of current school funding. The consortium responded to the comments in an appropriate manner with their plans for sustainability.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Seven sustainability principals are described in the narrative. They represent a reasonable approach to sustainability and show that the group will try to maximize production on limited funds.</p> <p>A budget for three years after the term of the grant was not provided.</p> <p>The concept of collecting licensing fees was introduced. This will require further study.</p> <p>The state review of the grant also discussed issues with sustainability (because of over 25% of the grant going toward personnel services) with a strong comment related to "bad budgeting practices." Justification and further information is presented from the consortium in response to that comment.</p> <p>Sustainability of any grant is an issue that administrators have to deal with. This one is no exception. Their was documentation provided ongoing positions versus grant-term positions. If the initiative provides clear data on improving student achievement, districts will find a way to continue the program.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A plan to tie at risk students to a broader network of community support agencies is achievable based on a current member school's program. Using the technology the consortium wants to increase access to service providers. The smaller version has had success.</p> <p>Desired results are listed in detail and are appropriate for this grant.</p> <p>The personalized learning system will provide data to target professional development for support staff. This would be a unique method of determining professional development needs and building the capacity of staff.</p> <p>The area of social-emotional health, especially for middle schools students is a concern. The ability to provide support mechanisms with outside agencies is a sound and appropriate method to keep students on track. There is a discrepancy when it comes to the lack of performance measures for social-emotional health concerns and the need shown in this section of the grant.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

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	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The personalized learning system was clearly discussed throughout the application. It was focused in scope and achievable. The rationale to target middle school students was very convincing. If their learning can be targeted based on their interests and then tracked via the system being designed, there is much potential to expand the grant beyond this consortium. Keeping the students on track in middle school, then providing them high school credit is an argument that college readiness and graduation rates will improve.</p> <p>The grant as designed will address gaps.</p> <p>The grant as designed will provide data to track the effectiveness of different variables. This can provide a wealth of research for further study and expansion to other schools.</p> <p>This was a complete grant proposal that was very detailed in scope. Backup material was appropriate and provided excellent documentation.</p>		
Total	210	186



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0473SC-2 for Laurens 55

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's reform vision is innovative, focused, comprehensive and coherent and extensively addresses its work to build on the four core assurance areas. Varied interventions and systems are supported by policies and processes to manage, monitor, and continuously improve outcomes for students. A convincing and evidence-based phase-in model, supported by thoughtful and realistic budget considerations, demonstrates capacity to positively impact student outcomes from the initial phase through scale-up and expansion phases.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(2)</p> <p>(a) The applicant's approach to implementation includes six middle schools in three districts with traditional 6th, 7th, and 8th grade configuration. Unduplicated counts of students by school demographics demonstrate that the applicant collectively meets the eligibility requirements for the competition. The applicant provides a thoughtful description, supported by research, of the process used to select participating schools.</p> <p>(b) A list of schools that will participate in the grant activities is included in the proposal.</p> <p>(c) The applicant has provided adequate evidence that it meets criterion (A)(2)(c).</p>		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to scale up interventions throughout its districts after middle school implementation, intervention evaluation and analyses, and completion of scale up implementation plans. Scale up is conditionally proposed for high school, but the applicant indicates flexibility dependent upon district needs and programmatic evaluation; thus, elementary schools will be considered if evaluations so warrant. Innovations, activities, and lessons learned from the applicants reform efforts will be shared with all districts and the Western Piedmont Education Consortium (WPEC) and will be used to develop full scale up implementation plans. WPEC has provided a convincing letter of project support that explicitly identifies actionable services and assistance. The applicant's Logic Model focuses on the problem statement "How can the grant consortium districts work at the middle school level to increase the future number of on time high school graduates who are ready for college, career, and civic participation?" A research- and experienced-based hypothesis is supported by ambitious and attainable project goals guided by inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The applicant has demonstrated an understanding of systemic change and describes progressive and realistic outcomes: Short-term--changes in Middle School, Intermediate--changes in overall student outcomes, and long-term--changes to the system.</p> <p>The applicant's scale up plan demonstrates a realistic approach- for example, the applicant identifies the logical need to implement the plan at the middle school level and conduct a thorough evaluation and analysis of the interventions implemented prior to fully completing scale up plans. Enlisting the assistance of WPEC districts will provide the applicant additional technical assistance and guidance for scale up and provide a venue for communicating the program to other districts; district superintendents of WPEC as well as superintendents from non-participating schools have signed letters of agreement to support the scale up efforts.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(4)</p> <p>(a) The applicant has provided a logical and convincing plan to increase performance on summative assessments that is supported by appropriate activities, plans, and timelines that include rationale, deliverables, parties responsible through the grant funding period.</p> <p>(b) The applicant's plan to decrease achievement gaps demonstrates a high level of collaboration, evidence of purposeful data collection and analysis, and understanding of systemic reform. Realistic goals have been identified. The applicant's primary focus is to address the achievement gaps between African American, Hispanic, and LEP students using the subsidized meals subgroup as the overarching identifier. Additionally, the applicant plans to conduct research to compare overall results for teachers who hold the state's credential for teachers of children in poverty and those who do not hold this certification.</p> <p>(c) The applicant has provided a logical and convincing plan to increase on-time graduation rates of students ready for college, careers, and citizenship that is supported by appropriate activities, plans, and timelines that include rationale, deliverables, parties responsible through the grant funding period. The plan comprehensively addresses the risk factors associated with high school dropout rates and addresses the needs of the whole student.</p> <p>(d) The applicant has provided a logical and convincing plan to increase college enrollment rates that is supported by appropriate activities, plans, and timelines that include rationale, deliverables, parties responsible through the grant funding period.</p> <p>(e) Although the applicant has opted not to include goals related to postsecondary degree attainment, the applicant is considering implementation of pre-AP curriculum to increase the likelihood of AP success in high school.</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(1)</p> <p>(a) The applicant demonstrates an exceptional level of responsibility and success in implementing and sustaining successful projects and developing a culture of teamwork necessary for continuous improvement and student achievement. The applicant</p>		

demonstrates four years of persistent improvement, and exceeded the state's average in nearly every assessed content area in SY 2012. Fully accredited with commendations, applicants have received awards for closing the achievement gap and for student achievement.

(b) Although the applicant does not have schools identified as persistently lowest performing or schools that have been eligible for SIG, the applicant takes action to improve student achievement in low performing schools , often in ways that align with turnaround principles and practices.

(c) The applicant makes student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in multiple formats. All consortia schools utilize Pearson's Powerschool. Powerschool provides near-real-time data on student performance for families, and an extensive suite of applications for educators. In addition, educators use Extent Enrich for student assessment data, including student growth, and the state's longitudinal data system, SLICE. The state and consortium provides educators a rich array of other data, such as NWEA MAP, South Carolina Occupational Information System, and others.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(2)

(a) The applicant demonstrates a high level of documented transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. The applicant makes public LEA school-level expenditures from state and local funds by category on on LEA webpages (personnel salaries, instructional salaries, teacher salaries, non-personnel expenditures). Additionally, monthly expenditures over \$100 and credit card statements are posted by month.

(b) The applicant makes available personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only.

(c) The applicant makes available personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only.

(d) The applicant makes available personnel salaries at the school level for non-personnel expenditures.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(3)

The applicant provided a copy of the reform proposal to the South Carolina Department of Education and provided 10 business days to offer comment regarding the application. The SCDE provided feedback and the applicant provided clarification and rationale as applicable. Additionally, the applicant demonstrates a qualified understanding of state statutes, guidelines, and regulations that authorize flexibility for local districts and schools.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(4)

(a) The applicant has demonstrated extensive efforts to engage all stakeholders in the development of the proposal including district advisory councils, student advisory councils, workforce development agencies, local board members, elected officials, students, parents, principals, teachers, and the broader community. Activities are documented, commencing May 30, 2012, from the initial planning meeting through draft finalization on October 26, 2012. Additionally, the proposal was posted on the web October 11, 2012 and provided a means for anonymous or signed comments.

The applicant provides attendant agendas, goals, meeting dates and participants, and other documentation as evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement. All comments received by the applicant relating to the proposal were supportive.

(a)(i) Although the applicant does not have collective bargaining representation, the reform proposal is supported by the two major and one local teacher organizations that exist in the consortium areas. The reform proposal is supported by 83.63% of the teachers, and signatures of support are included in the application.

(b) Stakeholder letters of support are numerous and include advocacy groups, business community, Civil Rights organizations, education agencies and associations, IHEs, legislators, local civic and community-based organizations, municipalities, parents and parent organizations, and student organizations. Letters of support are included in the application.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(5) The applicant has provided a convincing and extensively thorough needs gap analysis of its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The analysis describes each element or action/activity of the plan and comprehensively identifies and compares existing resources to needed resources for all phases of the reform project, and the logic and rationale for the reform effort is clearly evident.</p> <p>The applicant has identified the required elements for personalized learning environments, conducted initial scans on the status of those elements in the three districts and six schools, researched the marketplace on options for supplying additional elements, and prepared a plan for how the environments will be created, by whom, by when, and with what resources. The applicant has also conducted a needs analysis of the students in the districts and student performance.</p> <p>The table recording the needs-gaps analysis is included in Appendix 33 at A-457. The table identifies the desired PLE-PLP feature (each feature explicitly identified in the RTT-D Application for Funding document) with columns for <i>Already Have It?</i> and <i>What Else is Needed?</i></p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(C)(1) The applicant presents a plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The applicant's plan is supported by research and is specified under each goal of the reform plan, inclusive of rationale, deliverables, and parties responsible throughout the implementation process. However, many of the timelines, activities, and deliverables are broad, and parties responsible frequently exclude classroom teachers, making it difficult to discern the level of participation of classroom teachers in the process. Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students is not substantive. The feedback quality and frequency of updating individual student data and personalized learning is not comprehensive. The applicant' cites the development of Mastery Guides as key to the PLE design, however, information regarding Master Guide development, their proposed standards-based learning progressions, high-quality approaches to and environments, systems fro recommending next steps, and effectiveness monitoring and evaluation is not substantive.</p> <p>(a)(i) Students are exposed early to career possibilities and the knowledge, skill sets, dispositions and credentials required for various careers. Students receive support in development of individual graduation plans for meeting their goals and receive assistance in the selection of high school career cluster majors. A strong support system monitors student progress and provides related supports, including skill and interest assessments that connect K-12 coursework and learning to their goals and future success. The applicant plans to expand on current EEDA concepts by incorporating additional skill development, student ownership of learning, and a mindset that intelligence is not static. However, expansion on EEDA concepts is non-specific and, although identified under Goal 1 (1.3.1-1.3.3), the deliverables are broad, and parties responsible include implementation coordinators, school and district leaders, and guidance counselors, making it difficult to discern the level of participation of classroom teachers in the process.</p> <p>(a)(ii) The applicants are implementing the college- and career-ready common core standards in English language arts and mathematics, and have rigorous science and social studies standards. Additionally, the applicants have rigorous graduation requirements that include 24 credits, and students who do not have adequate credits by the end of 6th grade are at risk of dropping out or not graduating on time. The applicant proposes reform efforts to ensure that students have at least one credit before transitioning to 9th grade. Individual graduation plans are developed in 8th grade, and the applicant proposes to to enhance existing competencies the PLE before the development of the individual graduation plan. The applicant currently uses the ACT PLAN EXPLORE series, and will expand the use of preassessments to measure college- and career-ready skills. However, it is not clear how the applicant will expand the use of preassessments to measure college- and career-ready skills, and it is not clear how the applicant's strategy will enable students to understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals.</p> <p>(a)(iii) Educators in the consortium receive training in increasing rigor, skill development integration, and progressing students through Depth of Knowledge (DOK) sequencing. Flexible and differentiated techniques that support learning at a deep level include inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, Montessori, and hands-on learning. The applicant proposes to structure the PLE in such a way that all students are engaged in deeper learning and that the experiences reflect the student's selected learning progression and interests. Although the applicant indicates that expectations will be set to increase options for project-</p>		

and inquiry-based learning, Montessori, and other approaches, the level of training for participating educators and subsequently, student access to the instructional approaches, is not specific.

(a)(iv) The applicant believes that components of being ready for college, career, and responsible citizenship includes critical thinking, the ability to make logical judgments, and an openness to exploring new and different ideas and perspectives. The applicant proposes an expansion of existing programs such as Safe Schools, Confucius Institute and visual and performing arts. The applicant references Goal 1.3.7 indicating that the applicant will train students on goal setting, assessing PLPs, assessing status, planning next steps, and monitoring progress. Specifics regarding student trainings is not provided. There is insufficient evidence to ensure that students will have access to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives or that teachers will have the requisite skill, knowledge or training to support students in this area.

(a)(v) A key component of the applicant's reform vision is that students leave middle school with the language and mathematics skills critical for high school success. Personalized Learning Plans, a component of PLE, are proposed beginning in grade 6. The development of Mastery Guides will outline learning progressions, definitions of mastery and how it is assessed, identification of high quality learning environments and approaches, systems for recommending next steps, and evaluation. Additionally, the reform plan includes increasing science and social studies metrics by improving literacy across the curriculum. Students will receive direct instruction on goal setting, communication skills, and soft skills required for college and career success. The applicant' cites the development of Mastery Guides as key to the PLE design, however, information regarding Master Guide development, their proposed standards-based learning progressions, high-quality approaches to and environments, systems fro recommending next steps, and effectiveness monitoring and evaluation is not substantive.

(b)(i) Personalized Learning Plans will begin at the student's current level in language arts and mathematics. Students and educators will collaborate and focus on the long-term goal of graduating on time ready for college or career, citizenship and career possibilities, and how the current term's learning (content, skills, dispositions) represent a component of the long-range plan. Additionally, this collaboration will identify short-term progression goals, benchmarks, assessment, optimal learning environments and approaches, and continue to explore student interests.

(b)(ii) The applicant's reform plan thoroughly addresses high-quality instructional approaches and environments. Plans for developing exemplars and building curriculum management system that unifies standards, Mastery Guides, approaches, environments, and effective resources are but a sampling of the elements.

(b)(iii) The applicant is currently aligning existing content to CCSS and currently utilizes several different sets of digital resources, however,

(b)(iv) (A)(B) The applicant has included plans for establishing expectations for the quality and quantity of regular feedback and plans for monitoring, assessing and modifying throughout implementation. However, definitions of what constitutes appropriate feedback has not been established and timelines for frequency of feedback are vague.

(b)(v) The applicant states that it will begin training of staff on the SPPS system and its ABC indicators for at-risk students. However, procedures for ensuring that at-risk students are provided necessary accommodations are not specific.

(c) The applicant plans to develop mechanisms and modules for parent and student training in multiple and differentiated formats to ensure that they understand how to use available tools and resources that includes brochures, online help, face-to-face training, remote service, and student help desk systems. However, additional information regarding how access will be guaranteed to all parents and students.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(2) The applicant's reform plan is comprehensive and focused, and is supported by goals and action plans that include rationale, deliverables, and parties responsible for the implementation period and beyond.

(a)(i) The applicant will begin development of Mastery Guides for ELA and mathematics in 2013. Beginning in Spring 2013, ELA and mathematics teachers from participating middle schools will work in vertical teams that include 5th and 9th grade content area teachers will meet to develop standards-based learning progressions. The consortium will host summer institutes focused on PLE and PLP systems, strategies and supports. Additionally, cross-divisional teams (ELA and mathematics teachers, master teachers, guidance counselors, career development facilitators) will meet to update Mastery Guides, share best practice, and refine systems. Plans to socialize PLE and PLA among other educators from schools in the consortium and WPEC are included.

(ii) The applicant demonstrates a high quality plan for content and instructional adaption in response to student's academic needs, personal interests, and optimal learning. The plan includes setting benchmarks, accommodating academic needs,

matching personal interests, and alignment to optimal learning environments and approaches.

(iii) The applicant will use existing assessments, expand some existing systems for progress monitoring for special education students, and provide recommended progress measures through the Mastery Guides. Data will be included in the PLP tracking system and reviewed quarterly to identify trends in systems most/least effectively impacting student outcomes.

(iv) The applicant currently uses feedback provided by the LEA's educator evaluation system on professional growth needs and recommendations. The applicant proposes general plans to augment this process by tracking professional development to changes in student performance, and making recommendations based on effectiveness and ROI. However, specific measures of effectiveness are not identified and the applicant does not provide substantive detail on how feedback will be collected, aggregated, monitored, evaluated or how results will be used to improve teaching and learning.

(b)(i) Summer institutes will provide training on learning approaches and environments and how to match student needs to those approaches and environments. This information will also be a component of the Mastery Guides and be reviewed by Professional learning Communities focused on improving practice. The applicant does not fully address how it will identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests.

(b)(ii) The applicant's goals and plan incorporate access to resources for educators and recognizes digital resources as a critical component of personalizing instruction. A unique focus of the plan is to implement cross-school consortium-wide PLCs and PLC virtual communication. A plan for vetting, sharing, and promoting new content, skills, approaches and environments is evident.

(b)(iii) The applicant demonstrates a plan that includes training on personalized approaches to learning and matching student approaches to student needs. Continuous learning systems- systems that are consistently being updated and improved - are part of the program ID, recommender, and effective evaluation systems.

(c)(i) The applicant uses information from the teacher evaluation system to help educators assess and take steps to improve collective educator effectiveness. Educators are evaluated on their technological proficiency and maintain ePortfolios with demonstrations and professional development plans. School culture and climate are not addressed.

(c)(ii) The consortium members are fully accredited and have established continuous improvement systems. There is routine focus on school improvement, student assessment and learning, closing achievement gaps, promotion of action research and other actionable items related to improving student outcomes. Additionally, the districts are members of WPEC, implement Positive Behavior Supports, and demonstrate active collaboration with IHEs and community organizations to address the academic, social, health, and behavioral needs of students.

(d) The applicant demonstrates a plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective or highly effective teachers/leaders, especially in hard to staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas. The applicant has plans to align professional development with educators' professional needs, and establishing a rating system that, among other things, will use data to make decisions about assignments. Additionally, a reward system is planned that may incorporate factors such as working at a hard to staff school, incentives to attract teachers in hard to staff subjects (STEM, special education, ESOL). However, it is not clear how the applicant's plan specifically addresses increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1) The applicant has a high quality, convincing plan to support project implementation.

(a) The applicant demonstrates a consortium governance structure that is organized to provide support and services to all participating schools.

(b) The applicant demonstrates a thoughtful and focused approach to the development of school leadership teams and has sufficient flexibility and autonomy for successful implementation.

(c) (d) The applicant demonstrates differentiated approaches to student progression and credit award based on demonstrated mastery. The applicant plans to expand circumstances in which students can earn Carnegie units in middle school via Proficiency Based Credit (PBC), and districts are currently investigating applications for approval of several PBC courses. However, more substantive information is required regarding how the applicant is investigating applications for approval of the

PBC courses.

(e) The applicant has demonstrated a plan to provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students. For example, as processes are revised to implement PLE-PLP, the processes for IEP and LEP plans will be revised accordingly. The applicant currently utilizes an array of technological resources to meet the needs of all students, many of which are available for student use at school or home, including academic software applications, assistive technology, and Internet-based materials. The applicant's plan does not fully address how learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, in particular students with disabilities and ELLs.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(2)

(a) The applicant proposes unique and innovative to ensure that parents, educators, students and stakeholders have access to content, tools, and other learning resources in and out of school. In addition to the current ability to access much of the data that will be in PLE, all systems will be made accessible in and out of school in accordance with FERPA guidelines. In addition to face to face training for parents on system use, mobile phone applications will be encouraged for families without home Internet access. Additionally, the applicant is considering public kiosks for PLE access, and libraries and community centers will provide access outside of regular school hours.

(b) The applicant demonstrates a high quality plan to ensure that students, parents, educators, and stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support. Systems will have materials on how to use them including online instructional modules, flyers, and videos. Information and support will also be provided through classes, student help desk, and user groups.

(c) A system requirement for any PLE will be that data are exportable and available in open format for use in other systems.

(d) The applicant meets the requirements for this criterion.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(1)

The applicant has demonstrated in this section, and throughout the proposal, a commitment to and plan for continuous improvement of its reform plan inclusive of strategies to provide feedback on progress toward goals. The strategy includes a timeline and addresses activities to be undertaken during and post grant funding. The reform project will have full-time implementation coordinators with multiple layers of project oversight. Coordinators are responsible for grant implementation functions as well as training, developing rubrics, serve as data coaches, and serve as experts on learning environments and approaches. The applicant's plan requires additional information regarding how the coordinators work with responsible parties on specific project actions ("to do" lists), deadlines, and budgets.

The applicant cites the PDSA (Plan Do Study Act) and continuous improvement cycles verified by AdvancED as continuous improvement systems in place at the macro-, school-, teacher-, class- and student-levels. However, it is not indicated how or if those systems will be modified to reflect the PLE initiatives or how those existing systems in their current state will contribute to the continuous improvement of the PLE initiative.

Each district has MOUs and designated contacts who are voting members of the consortium's executive board. Additionally, the applicant specifies strategies to provide opportunities of ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the terms of the grant.

A great many of the initiative components are dependent upon contractual services, and teachers- throughout the plan- appear to have a limited role in the development of initiatives yet will be charged with fully implementing the initiatives.

The applicant states that the Consortium will provide public presentations and issue press releases, create a website, add on to existing websites, present information to local boards, etc. The applicant indicates that parents who have signed up for email through the Parent Portal will receive direct electronic correspondence regarding the presentations, but it is not clear how parents without email capacity will be specifically served. The applicant cites Figure (A)xxx as indicating evidence of a

high-level timeline, but that Figure was not located in the document.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(2) The applicant presents a specific, logical, and actionable eight-strategy approach for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. However, more specificity is required regarding who will receive the organizational charts and key contact lists and how the items will be disseminated; and how parents and students will be encouraged to utilize web portals and other online data. It is not clear how the applicant will ensure that the 8-step strategy will address the issues of clear expectations, lines of communication, and appropriate information.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(3)(a)(b)(c)

The applicant's Official Performance Measures, Rationale, Calculation and Improvement plan demonstrates ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant proposed measures. The applicant has selected performance measures that will be the official reporting document for the reform project, supported by rationales for use, plans for improvements over time, and linked to the related goal. Baseline and target information on each performance measure are included.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(4) The applicant presents a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its reform proposal. In addition to the rigorous, continuous program management, evaluation, and improvement plan addressed earlier, an external evaluator will review the effectiveness of the reform implementation and activities performed under the grant.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (F)(1) (a) The applicants budget identifies all funds that will support the project. (b) The applicants budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the reform project. (c)(i) The applicant provides a description of the funds that the applicant will use to support the proposal, including total revenue from these sources. (c)(ii) The applicant's budget provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, including identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during the grant period. However, there is limited evidence of allocation of other funds to support the project during the implementation phase, and minimal evidence of funding to support the sustainability of the project post grant.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (F)(2) The applicant has a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant demonstrates a thoughtful front-end planning process that utilizes existing resources as well as recognizes the importance of developing staff expertise in order to develop a cadre of highly skilled in-house trainers. The applicant, however, does not fully		

address use of funds and identifies limited potential sources.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The districts and schools in the consortium have established partnerships that integrate public and private resources in collaborative efforts designed to augment existing school resources. These partnerships are broad based, and include mental health counseling, mentoring, tutoring, academic enrichment, and services to meet the basic health care needs of students. The applicant proposes to scale up the Saluda School District project to build on the project's documented success and make personalization of support plans a reality for consortium students.

The plan's overarching goal, under the PLE umbrella, is to reach beyond the school day academic interventions to address targeted social, behavioral, and emotional risk factors.

The applicant presents an ambitious, yet achievable plan, rich with resources and supports for students and families, and substantiated by a comprehensive, logical, and actionable proposal.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the four core assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice); accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The applicant presents a promising, research-based plan that provides innovative strategies and ideas to implement Personal Learning Environments.

Total	210	182
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0473SC-3 for Laurens 55

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
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(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p data-bbox="50 138 448 174">(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p data-bbox="77 184 1528 342">The applicant has decided to focus on two key transitional grades, from 5 to 6 and 8-9 as well as the middle grades 6-8 for this proposal. The applicant recognizes that these transitional periods are critical times for adolescent development and focuses attention in this grade span within the proposal. This decision to target this middle adolescent and the transition grades at in the spectrum is important and targets the necessary supports to a critical population that needs additional supports.</p> <p data-bbox="77 363 1560 583">The applicant discusses the proposed vision of work across each of the four core assurances in a sound manner. For example, for core educational assurance area #1, the applicant is aware of necessary work that needs to take place as the state and districts have adopted the new Common Core standards and the districts' move toward the SMARTER Balanced Assessments. The applicant team has begun the foundational work of unpacking the new standards and assessments and has developed a strong focus on the shifts found in these new standards. Within the description of the first educational assurance area, the applicant is able to articulate that much of the proposed work builds on current successful approaches at the school sites. Many of the proposed strategies are expansion of the current work by building on prior successes.</p> <p data-bbox="77 604 1560 762">This consortium has the benefit of having state level coherence in the type of student information system that all schools use for their students. The longitudinal data system SLICE is promising for tracking warning indicator for the most at risk students. Similarly, the Excent Enrich Assess® system will also help educators access rich assessment data from a common data based used by all of the state's schools. The applicant is able to build on the current strengths of the data systems that are provided and lead at the state level.</p> <p data-bbox="77 783 1544 909">The curriculum management and recommender system is less clear. It is difficult to assess the type of recommendations that will be made at the student level. For example, it is not clear what the applicant means by "curriculum use" based on each "student's unique situation." It is not clear whether this system supports the everyday interactions between teacher and student or if this system helps track the courses that students take so that specific requirements and/or standards are met.</p> <p data-bbox="77 930 1555 1056">The applicant mentions a variety of strategies such as "twilight school, small group instruction, project-based learning, and on-line, anytime instruction" but does not clarify how these specific strategies are part of a larger vision of providing a personalized learning environment for students. These are all good ideas but as a list, they do not coalesce into a larger coherent strategy in supporting personalized learning.</p> <p data-bbox="77 1077 1555 1203">The applicant does not discuss the vision of recruiting and developing effective teachers and principals. The applicant focuses attention more on sharing the state system of evaluation teachers. While it is important to understand the current context of work regarding the systems that are in place to identify effective educators, the applicant has not laid out a comprehensive and coherent reform vision regarding building and retaining effective teachers and leaders in the system.</p> <p data-bbox="77 1224 1533 1318">The applicant's work at Sanders Middle School is promising. The applicant demonstrates that it has experience in working in low performing schools and having success in reform efforts in recent years. The strategies that are in place at this target school have potential to support a range of personalized learning environments for students.</p> <p data-bbox="77 1339 1219 1371">This section was awarded a 7 out of 10 because the applicant had met most of the criteria listed.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p data-bbox="50 1472 448 1507">(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p data-bbox="77 1518 1555 1707">The applicant has described the process by which selected schools will participate thoroughly. This included giving additional context on the elementary feeder schools and high schools that interact with the targeted middle schools. The applicant provided a diagram that describes the full K-12 school system across the three school districts was helpful in that it demonstrated that the applicant understands that while the grant is focused at the middle grades, it is important to understand how students are prepared in entering these middle grades and how the high schools will then receive and continue support for these students.</p> <p data-bbox="77 1728 1555 1917">The applicant provides the list of participating schools and has provided specific numbers of students across the various demographics that will participate in this work. However, for table A2iii, it was unclear how these numbers were further broken down by schools and by grade levels in the case of the Laurens 55 District. Because the applicant is serving a relatively small population of students (<2500), the data grain size presented was too large to understand the full context of the student population needs. Consequently, the applicant did not demonstrate enough evidence that it understood the context at the school site level across all six schools so that it could support high-quality implementation of the proposal.</p> <p data-bbox="77 1938 1487 1997">It was beneficial to understand that the three participating district are part of a larger consortium (WPEC) and the three participating districts have worked in the past on other teams. As mentioned later in the organizational and management</p>		

structure of the team, it is unclear what the role of WPEC is in organizing and management the proposed work.

This section was awarded a 7 out of 10 because the applicant provided necessary charts and data that highlighted the various demographics of students that the proposal would serve. There was not enough evidence provided in the proposal in how the applicant intended to support a high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not include a high-quality plan in describing how the reform proposal will be translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. The applicant has listed a number of activities that it intends to do during and after the grant period but does not provide clear goals or milestones, specific timeline for the activities, or describe the parties responsible for each activity as it pertains to the scaling up efforts beyond the participating schools.

The extension-work at both the elementary and high schools is not fully formed. The rationale for working across the K-12 spectrum is evident, but the activities proposed are too general.

The 13 goals listed in table A3i are concrete, but doesn't include quantitative or qualitative outcomes that would help strengthen the goal so it is realistic and ambitious. For example, for goal number 4, it would be helpful to understand the growth rate that the applicant anticipates with this grant funding. Consequently, the goals as they are defined in table A3i are vague because they lack these defining metrics.

Similarly, the logic model proposed in table A3ii is does not provide enough specifics to understand how these resources will be targeted across the various student and teacher populations across the six schools. The outcome measures listed are not measureable, and it is unclear what, if any baseline data is present and what the anticipated growth would be over the term of the project. The applicant also does not identify what their definition of short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes are with a specific timeline with associated dates. Most of the activities listed within this logic model are clear but the activities are not associated with responsible parties who will be leading the work.

This section was awarded a 2 out of 10 because overall, it was poorly developed as it did not include a high-quality plan and the activities in themselves were not adequate in scaling up efforts beyond the participating six schools.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presents a comprehensive set of data regarding each of the four areas listed in criteria (A4, a-d). For criteria A4.a, the growth rates for the performance on summative assessments are not ambitious enough. Depending on the targeted activities each year the growth may not be a linear growth as show in the project estimates, but one that may have steeper growth rates based on the intensity of set of activities during or after the time period.

The applicant does a good job in breaking down each of the subject area summative assessment goals by school sites and grade levels. The applicant need to address how the team intends to anticipate for the changes in the new assessments that are rolled out by the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and made necessary adjustments to how the summative assessments goals may change due to the nature of these new assessments. That is, it is not clear whether these project numbers set for school year goals after 2014 makes the assumption that the current state tests would be similar in nature to that of the new (SBAC) tests.

For the table A4bii, the applicant does not provide clear deliverables over the timeline of the grant in how it intends to decrease of the achievement gaps. Even though the applicant has provided timelines of work, the outcomes listed with the timeline are vague and not measureable. The activities proposed in decreasing the achievement gaps are promising and is coupled with clear rationales. The tables A4biii provide a more robust picture of the annual goals proposed for decreasing achievement gaps.

The applicant needs does not have ambitious goals at Saluda High School across the board for all populations, especially for the African American, Hispanic, SWD, LEP and subsidized meals subgroups.

This section was awarded an 8 out of 10 because the applicant has provided a comprehensive vision in what it intends to accomplish with the targeted student populations through its detailed activities and plans. The applicant has also identified the academic needs of the targeted student populations and have tried to match the activities to fit the needs presented. Points were subtracted as some of the goals were not ambitious.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided strong evidence across the three consortia school districts in demonstrating a clear record of success. A majority of the student population across all three districts has increased the state summative testing scores over the past four years and the applicant has highlighted a significant number of successful programs that advances student learning.</p> <p>Additionally, the applicant has provided strong evidence in how it has improved student learning outcomes as demonstrated in tables B1bi, B1bii, and B1biii. All three of these tables demonstrate strong evidence of how the schools within this district consortium have supported closing achievement gaps at the lowest-performing schools across the districts.</p> <p>The applicant has provided evidence of how it intends to make student performance data available to students, educators and parents. The use of tools that are in place with across the consortium districts and the school sites are impressive. There is a lot of student performance data that is available. It is less clear how students and parents will engage with the data so that it would further their participation in the students' academic careers. Most of the plans regarding how to use the data are targeted toward teachers, <u>but the plans for how to best engage with the student and parent communities not well detailed.</u></p> <p>This section was awarded an 11 out of 15. Overall, the applicant demonstrated good evidence of the three sub-criteria a-c. The applicant does not fully address how it has engaged with parents and students in supporting their participation to engage with the data in supporting student learning. One point was taken as part of criteria B1c.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated strong evidence in providing a high level of transparency as described in criteria B2. The applicant has described and referenced the processes by which the public can access the financial expenditures at the school site level across the four listed <u>categories</u>.</p> <p>For example, the applicant has provided references and location to where actual personnel salaries (criteria B2a) can be found. Actual personal salaries at the school level for teachers and instructional staff have also been identified and the applicant describes how both sets of these data can be found on the district's website. Lastly, the applicant has provided evidence of how the district keeps track of non-personnel expenditures as records for transactions over \$100 are available on the district's website.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant received the full 5 out of 5 points as the applicant has clearly demonstrated that it has the processes and practices set up so that the investments made in the schools are transparent to all stakeholders.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated strong evidence that the districts within the consortium have worked under successful conditions and autonomy under State regulations and was awarded the full 10 out of 10 points for this selection criteria. The applicant gives examples of the various types of legislations that have been passed that promote autonomy at the district level. The "flexibility" that is mentioned is a strong support for districts to carry out its proposed work of creating personalized learning environment for their students.</p> <p>No points were taking off for this section as the applicant provided strong evidence that the state of South Carolina has provided the appropriate context for this set of districts to operate successful in prior reform measures.</p> <p>For example, the state provides districts with flexibility in when students can be tested and has rules and regulations that support innovative learning at the district and school site levels. The state allows exemptions to instructional plans as it relates to the district's strategic plan. Consequently, the applicant has certain flexibilities in working with its students as long as the consortium has a comprehensive plan in place that is approved by the School Board of Education.</p>		

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided abundant evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement efforts in the development of the proposal and was awarded 9 out of 10 points for this selection criteria. The descriptions of the engagement efforts are well detailed by the various meetings that have taking place over the course of the proposal development timeline. Engagement with key stakeholders is across all three districts and includes students, parents, and community members.</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrate strong support from teacher groups as described in criteria B4a(ii). The signatures from teachers demonstrated significant buy in and time invested by the applicant team to build understanding and engagement with the teacher educator stakeholder group.</p> <p>In addition, the applicant has demonstrated strong evidence from key stakeholder groups as detailed in criteria B4b. The range of support is deep and extensive and includes parent and student organizations as well as civic and business communities.</p> <p>The applicant has not included letters of support from the feeder and exit schools as part of stakeholder engagement. This proposal targets a core population in the middle grades and it is critical that the applicant team works in alignment and support from these sets of schools. The applicant has not included a letter of support from the larger consortium that the applicant belongs to who is mentioned in the narrative as a scale up partner.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a thorough analysis of the needs and gaps within and across the consortium schools. The eight gaps are well detailed and include significant rationale as to the root cause of the problem. The applicant does not provide a high quality plan in how it intends to take the analysis of the needs at and across the school sites, and in turn, create goals, provide clear actionable activities, provide a clear timeline, and assign responsibilities to key individuals or team members.</p> <p>Some of the activities that are proposed poorly address the identified needs. For example, in the case of capturing personal interests for students, the applicant describes the type of work that is needed to be done in generalities and does not provide concrete details as to who would be leading this effort and how this activity would be implementing over the course of the grant period.</p> <p>Similarly, it is not clear what the timeline is for the creation of the Mastery Guides. The timing and the process of this strategic activity is critical as students and teachers may not have the tools necessary to support the personalized learning environments if the tools themselves are in development. The applicant has posed some promising ideas drawing from the work from the <i>School of One</i>, but does not a clear plan on how this type of strategy would be implemented in addressing gap #3.</p> <p>While the applicant clearly describes the needs at the school and district level, there was not a sufficient plan in place to address those needs in a clear, coherent, and comprehensive way. This section was awarded 3 of 5 points to reflect a mid-point score range for this criteria.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan presented by the applicant in supporting student learning overall lacks the specificity that is necessary to determine the credibility and soundness of a comprehensive plan. For example, for goal 1, one of the core strategies for personalized learning includes the idea of "personalized learning plans." However, the applicant does not detail what the components of a strong personalized learning plan would be as the applicant only states that it will "enhance existing or develop or purchase systems for personalized learning plans" (Goal 1.1.1.1.). Consequently, it is difficult to understand how the other strategy components fit with the larger strategy of students' personalized learning plans. The applicant has not been able to describe successfully how students will go about understanding their own learning and developing goals on a daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. The frequency by which students are engaged in their learning goals is unclear. The annual progress check with the summative assessments is not adequate in providing timely feedback so that students can accelerate his or her own</p>		

learning.

It is also not clear how the students across the six schools with various needs will be differentiated in their strategies proposed in the applicant's action plan.

The applicant proposes the concept of "flexible learning" but does not go into details in how these programs would explicitly prepare students to be college and career ready. The applicant plans to use project based learning to promote deep learning experiences but does not discuss the current types of programs in its existing schools that it intends to build from or detail out curricular resources that would be used to support this type of student learning.

The applicant addresses criteria C1c poorly. The mechanisms proposed are more catered for families to review test scores and there is not an active engagement plan with students so that they are able to utilize the tools and resources provide to them in order to track and manage their own learning.

In regards to criteria C.1.a.i:

The applicant describes sound ideas behind how student will understanding their own learning, but there is not a credible or sound plan as to how the applicant intends to shift teacher or student practice in supporting these ideas.

In regards to criteria C.1.a.ii:

The proposed personalized learning plan is promising. The applicant has proposed that students review the learning plans on an annual basis. It is not clear whether the review of plans on an annual basis would be the appropriate frequency in promoting personalized learning.

In regards to criteria C.1.a.iii:

The applicant does not clearly identify what flexible learning is and how students would be involved in deep learning activities.

In regards to criteria C.1.a.iv:

The applicant has good ideas regarding why access and exposure to diverse cultures and context for students is critical to student learning and development. However, the applicant does not provide details as to what existing programs will be expanded and how all students would be reached through these expanded programs.

In regards to criteria C.1.a.v:

The applicant has good ideas in how process skills and content skills can be learned together with the school setting with supports from staff such as career development facilitators and coordinated school health instructors.

In regards to criteria C.1.b.i:

It is not clear when the Master Guides will be completed and what students will be working on as these guides are in development. The motivation and rationale behind these mastery guides are strong as they have potential of providing students with personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development.

In regards to criteria C.1.b.ii:

The strategies that are listed by the applicant have are lacking in specificity. The ideas behind the strategies hold promise but it is not clear how these strategies will be carried out in schools and in classrooms to meet the needs of all students.

In regards to criteria C.1.b.iii:

The applicant aims to align the content to the new Common Core State Standards. These new standards provide students with college and career ready skills. It is less clear how digital resources will be selected and if these resources would be aligned to the same standards.

In regards to criteria C.1.b.iv.A:

The applicant does not fully address this criteria component in detail. It is not clear how frequently students' progress would be measured.

The applicant received 10 out of 20 points in this section because the plan proposed does include emerging ideas on what needs to be done to support a personalized learning environment. However, the applicant is weak on the details of how these ideas would be implemented across all of the student population in the six schools.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The following comments below address the criteria found in C.2.a.

The applicant does not make it clear how it intends bring educators across the six schools to learn from one another in various training or professional teams. It is unclear how some of the tools such as Mastery guides will be developed in a way so that these tools would be utilized with all students during the grant period. Much of the engagement happens during the annual summer institute. It is unclear how the proposed activities work together to form a comprehensive instructional plan. and there is an overwhelming number of activities that are situated within these summer institutes. It is not clear if the full proposed set of activities would be beneficial as educators may be overwhelmed the various strategies presented in one setting.

It is not clear how all educators will adapt their content and instruction in response to student needs. The applicant claims that students and teachers will meet to discuss students' learning progressions and information can be extracted from the recommender system. First, it is not clear what the frequency of teacher to student conferences would be and how the recommender system would work in supporting personalized knowledge about each student over the course of the project.

The applicant does have a plan in place to frequently measure student progress through the use of the MAP and reading assessments. However, it is not clear what the suggested progress measurements would be that are part of the Mastery Guides.

The applicant does not provide a plan as to how it intends to improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness. The proposal of tracking program ID will only give data on teacher and principal attendance at PD, but not necessary lead to improvements to student learning.

The following set of comments below address the criteria found in C.2.b.

The applicant does not provide a high quality plan as to how it intends to support all educators with the access and training in accelerating student learning. The activities proposed are vague and does not include details of the type of tools and resources that will be utilized and how they all work together in forming a comprehensive plan that supports teachers' decision making through evidence and data use in the classroom. For example, it is not clear what the high-quality digital resources that will be used by teachers. It is important for the applicant to identify the tools and resources that it intends to use as some of the tools may be different to suit the various student needs across the content and developmental spectrum.

The following set of comments below address the criteria found in C.2.c.

The applicant provides reasonable detail as to how it will have supportive training and policies that support an effective learning environment. The applicant fully describes the context of the state's teacher evaluation system and recognizes that state level policies have implications and ramifications on their own work at the district level. The applicant can also take advantage of their participation within the larger WPEC consortium. That is, the applicant can take advantage of knowledge and expertise that is present within the larger WPEC consortium.

The applicant does not have a clear plan in how it intends to address criteria C.2.d. The incentive and reward system has not been solidified and is tentative and the system is not guaranteed to bring in effective teachers to hard to staff schools or high need subject areas.

Overall, this portion of the proposal moderately addresses the criteria listed in C2. There are a lot of ideas that the applicant intends to pursue, but not all of the ideas are fully conceptualized and developed as part of larger high-quality comprehensive plan that supports teaching and leading for all teachers in the system.

Consequently, for this criteria, it earned 10 out of 10 points as credit was given for the rationale behind the ideas and the ideas themselves, but the implementation plan behind the ideas overall lacked detail and coherence and didn't not explicitly address all of the student, teacher, and leadership populations.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides insufficient plans in how each of the three LEAs will work together as a consortium in supporting successful project implementation. The proposed organizational structure proposed lacks significant oversight from key

stakeholder groups. For example, it is not clear how teacher representatives, parent organizations, and or school leadership from participating districts would take part in the key decision-making. There is also not an advisory board by which key stakeholder groups would be represented. In the grant organization chart (exhibit D1a), it is unclear how WPEC would be interacting specifically with the LLS Consortium. The current organizational structure puts greater responsibility and accountability on the WPEC structure rather than on the LLS Consortium. The applicant does not clarify how stakeholders will be part of the Grant Executive Board.

The applicant does not provide clear plans as to how it intends to provide school leadership teams with flexibility and autonomy to support high quality personalized student learning nor does the applicant provide clear evidence to support criteria D.1.d. The applicant does not identify the types of policies and practices that will be in place across the three districts and how each district would support these efforts.

The list of learning supports for special populations provided by the applicant does not address how these tools and resources would be differentiated across the various subpopulations. The tools listed serve more as a list of possible resources that can be used, but there is not enough of a high-quality implementation plan in place to ensure that all students, especially student with special needs would be served by the proposal.

This section was awarded 4 out of 15 points as the policies and practices described overall were weak and vague. There was not a high-quality, comprehensive plan that was presented that would support teachers and all students so that they could thrive and excel in a personalized learning environment.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan in how the LEA and school infrastructure would support personalized learning. The details listed in the proposal acknowledge the criteria found in D2 but the applicant provides insufficient activities, milestones, goals, and timelines of work that would allow the LEA and the school infrastructure to support personalized learning. Points were given to this section as the applicant acknowledged and anticipated the technology infrastructures needs and provided details of work anticipated at each school site with grant funding.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The mechanism by which the coordinators report and are held accountable in this system is too generic. The exact role of the LLS Consortium executive board is not clear in how it will hold participants accountable for the work as well as take part in leading a continuous improvement processes within the system. It is not clear the type of data that the team will use in monitoring and measuring progress.

The applicant describes vaguely how the PDSA cycle along with the MAP scores would be used as a strategy for continuous improvement. However, the strategy is non-specific and it is not clear how this strategy would be applied to all of the proposed goals as well as all of the activities found under each of the goals.

The applicant has provided strategies as to how it intends to share public information on the quality of assessments. These strategies are adequate in communicating key stakeholder groups, but are not exemplary methods that engage stakeholders in active ways for the duration of the grant.

For this criteria, the applicant received a 3 out of 15 because overall, the criteria was not fully addressed in detail and did not address how it would improve on its plan over the course of the grant period.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not address how the communication and engagement strategies fit into part of their larger plan of work in supporting personalized learning. The strategies are limited as it is not clear who is responsible for the activity and how the

strategies are deployed over the course of the project.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides strong evidence and support in meeting most of criteria E3. The rationale and measures detailed in Table E3-a are clear and the applicant has detailed out how it intends to review these measures over the course of the project. The applicant does not proposed any grade-appropriate health or social-emotional learning indicator. For populations in grade 4-8, the selection criteria table states that "the applicant must propose at least one-grade appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan.</p> <p>The applicant provided extensive performance measures broken down by school populations and demographics as seen in Tables E.3.b.</p> <p>Even though the applicant has more that the required 12-14 performance measures, the measures proposed are missing the social-emotional leading indicator. As a result, the applicant was awarded 4 out of 5 points in the criteria.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a weak strategy of tracking program participation as way to assess the success of the investment of resources. This method is not comprehensive. The method proposed provides limited data and the tracking tool will not give the applicant enough information to evaluate the effectiveness of the program efforts. As a result, the applicant will not be able to take the limited data to inform on its decision-making in improving results and outcomes.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In regards to criteria F.1.a:</p> <p>The applicant has not clearly identified the various funds outside of RTTT-District grant funds that will support the project. It is not clear whether LEA funding would complement efforts from RTTT-District grant funds at the project level.</p> <p>In regards to criteria F.1.b:</p> <p>The budge and budget narratives that are provided are reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The applicant describes in detail each of the 13 projects and each project budget has been included.</p> <p>In regards to criteria F.1.c:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a strong rationale as to how the funds would be focused on building long-term sustainability personalized learning environments. The rationale for how the costs would be strategically used for long-term sustainability is not addressed.</p> <p>For this section, the applicant was awarded a mid-range score of 4 out of 10. The applicant was able to provide concrete financial figures for all of the 13 projects and projected them out over the project timeline. The budgets had sufficient detail. Much of the costs found in the project budget tables were contractual. The funding priorities do not reflect a balance of emphasis on building long-term sustainability of the project.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a strong foundation of how it intends to approach sustainability efforts for this project. While the seven sustainability principles provide guidance for the team in drafting out a sustainability plan, the applicant does not have a high-quality plan for sustainability. It is not clear what financial support will be sought after or would be provided by other sources</p>		

after the grant period is over. The applicant has earned 2 points out of 10 as the applicant has poorly addressed this criteria.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 1.</p> <p>The example of the partnership that Saluda School District has had with community partners is promising. This shows that Saluda, one of the three districts in the consortium, has had experience in working with community partners. It is less clear how the full consortium will work with partners as schools within the districts have differing needs. The partnerships that are listed by the applicant do not form a coherent list of partners as some of the partners on the list are listed more generically. That is, the names of the organizations are not specified, but listed as categories of community organizations.</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 2.</p> <p>The applicant has identified a total of six population-level desired results that are aligned with its broader RTTT-District proposal. The applicant has clearly outlined the population of students it intends to target with their own criteria based on the "ABCs". The applicant presented clear evidence that it understood how to identify the targeted high-need populations.</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 3.</p> <p>The applicant has listed a number of promising data systems that will house and track the identified indicators. It is not clear how all of these systems will work together as part of a larger system in providing consistent, timely, and relevant data to the key stakeholder groups. It is also not clear how the each of the listed partners would be able to track these indicators or work with these data systems. The applicant's plan to scale up the partnerships across to all populations sounds reasonable. The applicant intends to take advantage of the structures that are in place across the system in building out the work for all students.</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 4.</p> <p>The applicant provides a general description of how education and other services would be integrated into the school system. The applicant has not presented enough details as to how these additional partnership services would be integrated into the schools that support students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs.</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 5.</p> <p>The applicant poorly describes how it intends to leverage the partnerships proposed to build capacity of staff. The applicant does not address how it intends to build capacity of staff by supporting how they would assess the needs and assess of targeted students. The data tagging of services might be promising for staff to identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community. However, it is less clear how this system would improve decision-making so that available resources could be used to support students. There is not a specific plan on how parents and families would be engaged in this work over the course of the project and it is not clear how the applicant would routinely assess its own progress through these partnerships.</p> <p>The comments below address competitive preference priority part 6.</p> <p>The applicant has presented detailed plans for how the subgroups' achievement would grow over the grant period. The growth plans are ambitious and has intentions of strong impact for these populations.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant scored a 3 out of 10 in this competitive preference priority. While the applicant had some strong highlights regarding the uses of indicators and the growth goals for the target students, the applicant has not made a strong case of how these partnerships would be leveraged to support the districts' most high-need populations.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has not met absolute priority 1. The proposal contains many good ideas that are laid out by the selection criteria. However, the applicant was not able to make strong case of how the proposed strategies would be matched up for each of the students across the three districts. The strategies proposed tended to encompass all student groups without clear differentiation on the students' needs and assets. It was also not clear how teachers and school leaders would have the infrastructures and policies that are necessary to carry out their work in supporting personalized learning. The timeline of some of the tool development such as the Mastery Guides may delay the implementation portion of the personalized learning environment for student.</p>		

Total	210	108
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has not included an optional budget supplement in this proposal.</p>		